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KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

SUCCESS STORY

Kyrgyzstan Farmers Reap Benefits

With support from USAID, farmers bring barren land back into production.



Vegetables grow on land that had not seen a crop for many years. Kirkidan village, Aravon Rayon, Osh Oblast, Kyrgyzstan.
Photo: Winrock Intl.

The USAID-funded Water Users Associations Support Program helps a group of farmers in southern Kyrgyzstan restore their irrigation system that will bring water to over 300 hectares of land and provide incomes to the entire community.

Last year, twenty farmers from Tal-Bulak Water Users Association (WUA) in Aravon Rayon, Osh Oblast grew crops on 50 hectares of land that had been left unsown for many years. The irrigation system that used to bring water to their fields had not been repaired or cleaned for more than 15 years. Seasonal floods had filled irrigation canals with mud, and for at least past ten years Tak-Bulak fields that had not seen any water. "Each year we had to spend a lot of time cleaning the mud left after each flood, but harvests were still very low," says one of the farmers.

Through participation in the USAID-funded Water Users Associations Support Program (WUASP), Tal-Bulak members managed to reverse their fortune. In early 2006, the association received a \$33,000 grant from WUASP for rehabilitation of the irrigation system. The grant allowed the association members to build an aqueduct, a flood overpass, and to repair 636 meters of the canal.

While all of the rehabilitation work did not be completed early enough for the 2006 growing season, 20 farmers are already receiving water from the canal. On the land that just a year ago was barren, these Tal-Bulak members grew 35 tons of wheat, 81 tons of cotton, and 32 tons of water melons, valued at more than \$47,000. Some of the twenty farmers have already invested their earnings into their farms. Mamat Ergeshov purchased a tractor that will help him and other farmers to better cultivate the land and improve crop productivity. Janybek Ergeshov bought 20 goats and is planning to double his herd by next year. Mamasabyr Maksutov bought a second horse to help with his sheep breeding business.

"This year was productive, and next year will be even more so; we will not have to remove so much mud thanks to a new flood overpass," says Mambetali Egemberdiev, one of the farmers who participated in the rehabilitation project. Mambetali and his neighbors contributed the labor required for the renovation, while the USAID grant paid for the cement and steel required for the work. The association plans to completely rehabilitate the entire by the spring of 2007, which will provide irrigation water to an additional 280 hectares.

The Water User Association Project works directly with those who are most affected by degraded water delivery systems, providing training in system renovation, operation and management. Participants learn how to make investment decisions needed to maintain and improve on-farm systems, resolve conflicts, and long standing water management and delivery problems.